

**WHERE DID QUANTITATIVE METRICS IN HAUSA
AND OTHER CHADIC SONGS COME FROM?¹**

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The prosody of Hausa poetry and song is quantitative, that is, the rhythmic properties derive from syllable weight (heavy vs. light, or, alternatively, long vs. short). This is true for both formal written verse and for oral song ranging from the songs of professional singers to children's songs. The prosody of Classical Arabic poetry is likewise quantitative. There is some controversy among Hausa scholars concerning the extent to which quantitative prosody in Hausa can be attributed to Arabic influence. Greenberg (1949) cited five characteristics of prosody that are shared by Arabic and Hausa as evidence that quantitative metrics in all Hausa poetry/song can be attributed to Arabic influence. This paper shows that folk songs of several minimally studied Chadic languages spoken in Yobe State, where there is no evidence of Arabic influence, share the five properties that Greenberg cited. The conclusion is that these features are essentially universal to the prosodic systems of languages in which syllable weight is salient. The prosodic systems of poetry/song in Arabic, Hausa, Yobe State Chadic languages, and more distantly related languages of the Afroasiatic phylum are all manifestation of the same underlying system.

1. Quantitative Poetic Meters

The inherent rhythmic properties of metered poetry arise from two main sources, depending on the language: *stress* and *quantity*. One can illustrate these sources of rhythm with lines from English verse, which relies on syllabic *stress*, vs. lines from Hausa verse, which relies on syllabic *quantity*.

- (1) English: The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold,
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Gallilee.
(Lord Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib")
Meter: u u S u u S u u S u u S ["u" = less stress, "S" = more stress]

- Hausa:² Tuuraawaa sun ga Afirkanmu, Europeans saw our Africa,
A mafarkii har suka neeme mu, In a dream they even sought us out,
A yakiinii yau suka saame mu, Of a certainty today they have found us,
Doomin himmaa da yawan ilmuu, Through diligence and great learning,
Suka saadu da saababbin kaumu. They have met with our new nations.
(Abubakar Ladan, "Wakar Had'a Kan Afirka")
Meter: vv – vv – vv – vv –
["v" = light syllable, "-" = heavy syllable, vv = one heavy or two lights]

¹ I am honored that the conference Chairman and Convener have invited me to present at the First International Conference on Endangered Languages in Nigeria. I very much regret not being able to attend in person. I am also pleased to offer a presentation that I hope will benefit the memory of the late Professor M.K.M Galadanci, whom I knew well and whose work I admired. Prof. Galadanci probably would not agree with some of the points in this paper, but without his insights regarding Hausa poetic form, the paper may not have come into being at all and certainly would be much different from what it is.

² Doubled vowels represent long vowels. I have omitted tone marking here and throughout the paper.

Both these poems might be characterized as being in *anapestic tetrameter*, but there is a fundamental difference. Each line of the English verse has twelve *syllables*, with a primary stress or emphasis felt on every third syllable. Each line of the Hausa verse has sixteen *moras*, where a *light* syllable (CV) = one mora and a *heavy* syllable (CVV, CVC) = two moras. The two moras of the underlined positions are almost invariably filled by a heavy syllable whereas the two moras of the intervening positions are sometimes filled by two light syllables, sometimes by a heavy, without changing the mora count.³

The best studied systems of quantitative metrics are those of the classical Indo-European languages, especially Greek and Latin, and those of the Middle East, especially Classical Arabic and Persian. None of these are any longer living traditions.⁴ However, quantitative metrics are alive and well in Hausa and its sister Chadic languages! The purpose of this paper is to examine how metrics in Chadic poetry and song fit into the larger picture of quantitative metrics. The conclusion that I will draw is that a quantitative basis for metrical language is natural for languages in which syllable quantity is a fundamental phonological property. Although there may be cross-linguistic influences in poetry and song between languages with this property, the property itself is organic to the languages as are prosodic systems based on syllable quantity.

I begin with a discussion of Hausa, where metrics of poetry and song are extensively documented. In particular I address the fraught topic of whether or not the properties of Hausa poetry can be attributed to Arabic influence. I then present examples from some of Hausa's sister Chadic languages to show that the prosody of poetry and song in these languages shares fundamental properties of quantitative metrics seen in other languages even where there is no evidence of direct influence from other languages.

2. Two Traditions of Hausa Quantitative Meters

Poetry and song in Hausa⁵ are generally divided into two genres, *written* and *oral* (*rubutacciyar waka* and *wakar baka* respectively in Hausa). The written genre is composed in fixed stanzaic patterns (most commonly couplets or quintains) and is rhymed (most commonly, final syllables of stanzas rhyme and, in stanza types other than couplets, lines preceding the last line rhyme with each other but usually not with the last line).⁶ The oral genre is represented by songs of praise singers (for example, Musa Dan Kwairo) and popular singers (for example, Dan Maraya Jos), and in traditional genres such as children's songs and wedding songs. Oral genres generally have no fixed

³ Abubakar Ladan occasionally reverses this. For example, the line immediately following the stanza in (1) is *sun keetara koogii da Sahaaraa* 'they crossed the sea [lit: river] and the Sahara', where the penultimate underlined position comprises two light syllables. This reversal adds rhythmic interest because of its rarity.

⁴ The Arabic-speaking world is diglossic in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and colloquial varieties. There are poets who compose art verse in MSA using classical meters, but in colloquial, "which is used in popular music, children's songs, folk song and poems, and some literary poetry, the scansion is based on stress, not vowel length" (Michael Cooperson, p.c.).

⁵ The English words *poetry* and *song* are rendered by the single word *waka* in Hausa, which is appropriate, since all varieties of *waka* are generally composed for oral performance in sung or chanted form.

⁶ Less commonly, lines within a stanza, but not across stanzas, rhyme. A pattern that is never found in Hausa is rhyming of alternate lines within a stanza, as is common in English poetry.

stanzaic form or rhyme. Although the prosody of all oral song types is quantitative, general properties of their metrical form has not been systematically studied.

Somewhat controversial in the Hausa literature is the source or sources of the metrical properties of the written genre. Galadanci (1975) points to close similarities between the forms of Hausa and Arabic written poems and argues for applying the traditional Arabic system of scansion to Hausa, with some modifications to accommodate practices of Hausa poets. For example, he cites (page 13) the following lines that match the Arabic meter *hafiif*. The three feet, marked by vertical strokes, show the base scansion. The boxed syllables of each line shows the application of the "rule" or "deviation" *habni*, which deletes the second mora of a foot when it is part of a heavy syllable:

- (2) Feet: - v - - | - - v - | - v - -
 Duk ku sau-raa-ri zaa ni waa- kaa ku tuu-ba,
 Koo ku saa-muu ku tsii-ra tab- ban ha-kii-kan.
 (Shehu Usman ibn Hodiyo, "Wakar Tabban Hakikan", verse 3)
 'You all listen as I am about to sing, and repent,
 Such that you might receive salvation, with complete certainty.'

In contrast to this apparent influence from traditional Arabic metrics, Muhammad (1980) presents many examples where poets composing in the written form, with fixed stanzaic structure and rhyme, attribute the metrical patterns that they use to songs in the oral genre. For example, Akilu Aliyu composed many poems in meters in which he acknowledged such influences. An example is his "Kokon Mabarata", of which the meter is patterned on the refrain of a song by Mamman Shata Katsina, "Magaji Mai Ido Daya", with the basic scansion v - v - v - v - (Muhammad 1980:91). Akilu toys with the order of heavy vs. light in syllables 5 and 6, but the total is always 12 moras per line.

- (3) Metrics: v - v - $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} v \quad - \\ - \quad v \end{array} \right\}$ v -
 A yad- da rai- naa ya fi soo,
 A mai- ma- kon 'yan ka- ma- shoo,
 Ya-bon Ma- 'ai- kii na fi soo,
 Na baa da kwaa- zoo na fi soo,
 Ya-bon- sa baa Ma- gaa-ji ba.
 (Akilu Aliyu, "Kokon Mabarata", verse 4)
 'In the way that my life prefers,
 Instead of (being) a middle man,
 Praise of the profit is what I prefer,
 That I be diligent is what I prefer,
 In praising him, not Magaji.'

Even for written poems in meters resembling Arabic meters, there is dispute as to whether there is direct influence from Arabic. Alhaji Mudi Sipikin, himself a prolific poet, says (Sipikin 1978:63),

“A ganina babu abin da ya haɗa ma’auhin waƙar Larabci da ta Hausa rubutacciya. Mafiya yawa daga mawaƙan rubutacciyar waƙar Hausa babu wanda ya san ARULI ma’auhin waƙar Larabci balle a ce ta Larabci ya kwaikwaya ko kuma ta yi tasiri a kansa.”

[In my opinion there is nothing that associates metrics of Arabic poetry with that of Hausa written [verse]. For the majority of writers in the [tradition of] Hausa written poetry there isn't anyone who knows about ARULI, the metrics of Arabic poetry, much less could it be said that he imitated it or indeed that it had an influence on him.]

A similar view is expressed by Dauda Bagari in the introduction to his collection of poetry (Bagari 1987). He points out that the study of Aruli is not part of Arabic instruction in Nigeria nor do accomplished Hausa poets mention that their works use Arabic meters, and he concludes by saying (page iv), “...dangane da kokkoyon ma’auhin waƙoƙin Larabci, wannan kam dole ne masu yin wannan da’awa su yi sabon bincike a cikinsa [...as far as imitating meters of Arabic poems goes, as for this, those making this claim need to take a new look at things].”

How do we reconcile these views about composing Hausa poetry in quantitative meters? In a pioneering paper, Greenberg (1949) studies the metrics of two kinds of Hausa verse: primarily religious verse written in Arabic meters and what he calls “popular poetry”. For the former, his discussion is similar to that of Galadanci (1975), showing how composition of this type of verse conforms to that of the Classical Arabic canon, with a few features particular to Hausa poets. For popular poetry, he presents examples of 17 poems/songs that use quantitative meters not identifiable as having Arabic origin. In a section called “Historical Problems” (page 131) he says, “In regard to popular Hausa quantitative verse, there are two possible theories of historical origin. Either it is a native African verse form or it is an historical derivative of Arabic meters. *The latter alternative appears to be the correct one.*” [my italics--RGS] He gives several reasons for reaching this conclusion (page 132), summarized in (4):

- (4) (i) “...the very fact of the quantitative nature of this verse which is unparalleled, as far as we know, among African peoples not subject to intensive Islamic influence.”
- (ii) “...the division of the line into hemistichs.”
- (iii) “...Arabic verse avoids sequences of short [= light--RGS] syllables, a succession of three being rare and that of four almost unheard of. This same characteristic holds for Hausa popular poetry.”
- (iv) “...the alternative use of a long [= heavy] syllable or two short [= light] syllables...”
- (v) “The reckoning of final syllables as long for metrical purposes is another specific trait common both to classical Arabic and popular Hausa poetry.”

Greenberg was writing in 1949, at a time when Hausa’s sister languages in the Chadic family had been very little studied. In the remainder of this paper, I will describe metrics of some songs of Chadic languages of Yobe State to show that Greenberg’s premise in (4i) above is false. Traditional songs in these languages, a number of which are spoken by people who came under strong Islamic influence only in the late 20th century, follow strict quantitative principles. The general conclusion will be that general principles of quantitative metrics are *shared* by languages where syllable quantity is distinctive. These shared principles make it easy and natural for particular meters, including those of the Classical Arabic tradition, to be shared across languages in poetic composition.

4. A Ubiquitous Popular Meter

In (5) is a meter that is popular among Hausa poets and singers, with sample lines from some poems and songs:

$$(5) \quad \text{Meter: } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \{v\} \\ - \\ - \end{array} \right\} v - \quad - \underline{vv} - \underline{vv} - v -$$

Asma'u 'yar Shehu (Boyd & Mack)	A mu goodee Jalla da munku sam Nasaraa, jama'aa mu yi goodiyaa.	Let us thank the Lord that we have attained Victory, people let us give thanks.
Akilu Aliyu (<i>Fasaha Akiliyya</i>)	Sun cee mata daad'ii gooma wai, Wannan maganaa naa dai jiyaa.	They say of her ten pleasures, This talk I have indeed heard.
Dan Maraya Jos (“Jawabin Aure”)	(v) Uwaa da ubaa gaa gargad'ii, Kun ga auren tiilas baabu kyau.	Mother and father here is an admonition, You see that forced marriage is not good.
Haruna Oji (“Naira da Kwabo”)	Nairaa da kwaboo saabon kud'ii, Bana dai darajaa tasa taa da'fu.	Naira and kwabo, the new money, This year its value has increased.

These sample lines come from a 19th century poet, Asma'u 'yar Shehu, writing on a Jihadist theme; a 20th century poet, Akilu Aliyu, writing about the value of cows; a 20th century minstrel, Dan Maraya Jos, with an admonition against forced marriage; and a 20th century minstrel, Haruna Oji, explaining Nigerian currency at the time of decimalization. This meter has been popular among poets working in the 20th and 21st century, having been used by such well-known poets as Akilu Aliyu (as in the sample above), Abubakar Ladan, Mu'azu Hadeja, Na'ibi Wali, Sa'adu Zungur, Salihu Kwantagora, and many others, but it has been in use in written poetry since the 19th century, as seen in the example from Asma'u 'yar Shehu above.⁷

The basic meter is $\underline{vv} - \underline{vv} - \underline{vv} - v -$, that is, eight positions with the even numbered positions filled by a heavy, the odd numbered positions 1, 3, 5 filled either by a heavy or two lights, and position 7 always filled by a single light. In written poems, there is a certain amount of variation in position 1 between \underline{vv} , $-$, and $-v$, with some poets allowing more variation than others. In songs, such as those of Dan Maraya and Haruna Oji, part or all of the first position is often omitted, as in the first line of the Dan Maraya example. This is possible because the instrumental accompaniment keeps a constant rhythm, allowing the singer and the audience to know on which position the singer begins singing, whereas in a poem performed without accompaniment, it is the words themselves that maintain the rhythm. Note that positions other than the first, and occasionally the second, must be filled and are essentially invariable (aside from the $\underline{vv} = -$ variation).

This meter has sometimes been identified with the Arabic meter *mutadaarik*, but this is surely not correct. Wright (1967:365) says that Arabic *mutadaarik* is “one of the rarer

⁷ In a sample of 22 written poems using this meter, I found only two written by 19th century poets (Asma'u 'yar Shehu and Muhammadu na Birnin Gwari), but there are surely others. I found 16 different 20th and 21st century poets who have used this meter. A larger sample of poems would reveal many more poets using this meter as well as multiple poems in this meter by the same poet.

and later metres” and notes in a footnote that it was not included in the original description of the Classical Arabic repertoire. Moreover, as described in Wright (1967:365), the Arabic version of this meter would never have allowed a line to end with *v –*, a fact noted by Hiskett (1975:240), who, though he labels the meter “mutadaarik”, says, “These verses have an irregular final foot *v –*. This is not correct according to the strict classical rules.” Greenberg (1949:129) includes songs in this meter among his meters from “Popular Poetry” as both his Meter 1 and his Meter 4:⁸

(6) Meter 1:	(v) Abin da na bai waa Shaa-wuya, Baa naa bai waa Doodangaba.	What I give to Sha-wuya, I don't give it to Dodangaba.
Meter 4:	Mai baabu da zaafin zuuciyya, (–) Koo kuturuu bai fii shi ba.	The poor person has a bitter heart, Even a leper is not more so.

Another reason for claiming that this meter is not of Arabic origin is that it is used by poets/singers working in both the oral and written traditions. While it is common for poets in the written tradition to compose in meters from the oral tradition (Muhammadu 1980), I know of no cases where singers in the oral tradition have used meters identifiable as coming from among those in the Arabic canon, such as the ones described in Galadanci (1975).

It turns out that this meter is not specific to Hausa. In 2009, when I was visiting villages in Yobe State to record folk music in Chadic languages spoken there, singers in Garin Jala performed a song in Ngizim, a few lines of which are shown in (7).

(7)	Kaane ⁹ soo bee kaarak dengara, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i>	Well here it is something nice has come, Refrain
	Andəmiina[a] Maalam Baabayo, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i>	(All of you) greet Malam Babayo, Refrain
	Kaane Dokta[a] Gimba[a] ¹⁰ dengəri, <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i>	Well Doctor Gimba has come, Refrain
	Kaane anci kəmu yaareewa da? <i>Ai karniga jingaa karniga.</i>	Well does he want to hear our language? Refrain

The singer, Amina Yusufu Garin Jala, improvised lines for a song of welcome to the meter of a song (perhaps a set of songs) with the refrain *Ai karniga jingaa karniga*, a series of meaningless vocables with the metrical form – – vv – – – v –. The refrain is sung by a chorus of women and girls after each line sung by the soloist. A feature of Ngizim metrics, shared by other Yobe State Chadic languages though not by Hausa, is the possibility of treating word final vowels as long for metrical purposes. This is shown

⁸ It is strange that Greenberg did not notice that his Meters 1 and 4 are actually in the same meter, but since he was working from published sources, mostly Prietze (1904) and other collections from Prietze, he would not have heard a performance that would show features such as omitting initial positions made possible by a rhythmic instrumental accompaniment.

⁹ *Kaane* is equivalent to Hausa *ashee* ‘how about that?’. It is used basically as a filler at the beginning of many of the soloist’s lines.

¹⁰ Reference is to my collaborator in Yobe State language research, Prof. Alhaji Maina Gimba of the University of Maiduguri English Department.

by the vowels in brackets “[a]”. Word internal vowels, however, always retain their lexical value for length.

Amina also included traditional lines in her performance, such as those in (8).

- (8) (vv) Bataaba rəptu gaʒiigərin, When Bataba opens his granary,
See da ram maa, “Gwarboo aa rawan? Then he says, “Where is Gwarbo?”

In the first line of (8), the initial vv (or – v as found in many lines) is omitted, a possibility already mentioned above in Hausa songs in the oral tradition. Following the parenthesized “(vv)” one would expect the next two positions to be – vv, but instead we find *Bataaba*, that is, v – v. Note, however, that the mora count is still four, as it would be for – vv. What we really have is a transposition – vv → v – v. This is quite common in songs in languages of Yobe State, and it is frequently heard in Hausa as well (see (3), where the base sequence v – v – at the end of the line is sometimes realized – vv –).

While I was working in Yobe State, it was pointed out to me that other singers use the refrain seen in (7). A professional singer, Basasa (or Bazaza), who is ethnically Karekare, uses this refrain (pronounced *Ai karniga dingaa karniga*) in a song about making the pilgrimage to Mecca. The song is mainly in Hausa, but Basasa mixes in a few lines in Karekare. In (9) is a line in Hausa followed by a line in Karekare with the refrain, sung by a chorus of male drummers-singers, following each line.

- (9) (Too) matawallen Fiika[a] nakee kiraa, [Well] it is the Matawalle of Fika that I am calling,
Ai karniga dingaa karniga. Refrain
(Lau)kee waaka ndaruu sai sa kurbukoo, [Who]ever finds a way, he must escort (him),
Ai karniga dingaa karniga. Refrain

The parenthesized syllables at the beginning are sung simultaneously with the final *-ga* of the refrain so that the metrical line starts on the second syllable of the written line. The lines in (9) scan as vv – vv – | – v – v –, where each half of the line (separated by the vertical |) comprises eight moras. The substitution – vv → v – v has been pointed out for the song in (8). Basasa has other lines like *kyautan da ka miikaa Baasaasa* ‘the gift that you extend to Basasa’, with the scansion – – vv – | – – – –, where both halves of the line scan in the “canonical” way.

I have no idea as to the origin of this meter nor of other song traditions that use it. The point of this discussion is that cross-linguistic and cross-cultural adaptation of this meter has obviously been natural to people who speak languages where syllable quantity is a salient part of the phonology. This meter is clearly NOT of Arabic origin, and its ubiquity cannot be attributed to what Greenberg referred to as “intensive Islamic influence”. Indeed Islam was not prevalent in the Ngizim and Karekare communities until the second half of the 20th century.¹¹

¹¹ My first experience in Yobe State was in 1969-1970 when I was in Potiskum doing research on Ngizim. At that time, both Ngizims and Karekares still observed traditional rituals involving invocation of ancestors, libations of beer, and other decidedly non-Islamic practices.

4. Two Songs from Yobe State¹²

In this section I will describe the metrical organization of songs from speakers of two languages in Yobe State. This has two goals: (1) to show that the metrical structure of traditional songs in these languages has a quantitative basis; (2) to show that research on minority languages can give us a perspective on quantitative metrics that is not available when it derives solely on a focus on a dominant language like Hausa.

In (10) are a few lines from a long song in Ngizim sung in about 2007 by Amina Yusufu (the same singer represented in (7, 8) above, though on a different occasion) as she was grinding on a grindstone.¹³ The natural rhythm of each line of this song has the meter – v – v – v – v, established by the rhythm of the grinding, with the forceful downward stroke requiring more energy, and hence more time, than the upward stroke.¹⁴

(10) NGIZIM: “Ruwak Adak Vənyi” [Song on a Grindstone]

$$\left. \begin{array}{cccc|cccc} - & v & - & - & v & | & - & v & - & - & v \\ - & - & - & - & - & | & - & - & - & - & - \end{array} \right\}$$

- a. Naa ra- mau da yaa- ree- gaa,
- b. Naa ra- mau da yaa- ree bai.
- c. Kun ngaa- kun? Ja n- gaa- ja,
- d. Suu ndə- ma N-gə- zəm bi i bi?
- e. Sau- ra- gaa A- laa ngəb- ro,
- f. Naa ndə- mau kə ndat- taa- wa.
 - a. I am speaking in my language,
 - b. I am not speaking in a foreign language.
 - c. “Are you well?” “We are well,”
 - d. That is an Ngizim greeting, isn’t it?
 - e. My father-in-law, “*Ala nguburo*,” [a polite greeting from Kanuri]
 - f. I am issuing a greeting for respected people.

Each line consists of 12 moras, but in terms of syllables the moras are not distributed in the same way from line to line. The vertical strokes in the schema divide each line into two halves with six moras each. In the first half of lines a, b, d, e, and f, the syllable weights match the – v – v pattern of the grinding rhythm. However, in the first half of line c and the second halves of all the lines in this sample, the six moras are distributed over three heavy syllables as – – –. The alternation between – v – v, which has a feeling of two beats, and – – –, which has a feeling of three beats, is referred to as *hemiola*. This is very common in Hausa popular music as well, as in a line such as *Rabbanaa gwanin*

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¹³ The audio recording was made and transcribed by Malam Usman Babayo Garba, to whom I am grateful.

¹⁴ An analysis of this and 13 other Ngizim songs can be found in Schuh (2010).

koowaa ‘Our Lord the able one for everyone’ (Faty Niger, “Tamburan Aure”). It should be noted that Ngizim has prenasalized consonants. The nasal component can, and often does, combine with a final short vowel of the preceding word to form a heavy syllable, as in line (d) *Suu ndəma Ngəzəm bii bi?*, though in line (f) the syllable *kə* is scanned as light, that is, the line cannot be scanned **kə ndattaawa*.

The lines in (11) are from a Bole song called “Kona”, traditionally sung by women while grinding but also sung to drum accompaniment for dancing.¹⁵

(11) BOLE: “Kona”

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|-------|---------|--------|------|------|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | v | | - | v | - | v | | { | - | v | - | - | } |
| | | | | | | | | | - | - | v | - | |
| a. | N | ku-me | luu-la | ii- | pu | ii- | pu, | | | | | | |
| b. | I- | na | zon-ge | doo | 'yan | le | wa? | | | | | | |
| c. | Kaa- | na | Dii-sa | bee | Ba- | laa- | wo. | | | | | | |
| d. | Ki- | naa | tii-shi | Bee- | ge | Ab- | ba, | | | | | | |
| e. | Na | Daa- | da | Goo-ro | ndag | goma | Nga-ra, | | | | | | |
| f. | Dei- | di | Dii-sa | boo | pal- | la- | sa. | | | | | | |
- a. I hear crying, “Ow! Ow!”
 b. I ask is it a hyena or whatever?
 c. But it’s Disa son of Balawo.
 d. He failed to eat food, Bege Abba,
 e. They say Dada Goro went to Ngara market,
 f. And left Disa because of gossip (about him).

Metrically this song is rather complex and in some ways messy, but the quantitative regularities are indisputable. In the analysis in Schuh (2001) based on 133 different lines performed by six women,¹⁶ I found that 43 lines (32.3%) had the pattern in (12), where the first vertical stroke sets off an “extra-metrical” syllable (usually a filler syllable of some kind line *na* “they say”) and the second vertical stroke divides the line into metrically equal halves, comparable to the mid points of the lines in the Ngizim song in (10).

(12) v | - v - v | - - v -

If one looks at the half-lines separately, the metrical regularity is much greater. Of the second half-lines, 86 (64.7%) scan as *vv - v -* (or, in three lines, the metrically equivalent *- vv v -* as in line 11e). Another 29 (21.8%) scan as *- v - -*, which reverses the syllable weights of the second and third syllables but does not change the mora count. The first halves are more varied, but even there 57 (42.9%) have the form *(v) - v - v* and another 15 (11.3%) have the form *v v - v*, where the first heavy is replaced by a light,

¹⁵ A detailed analysis of the social context and the form of this song can be found in Schuh (2001).

¹⁶ “Different lines” means distinct lines of text performed by the same singer. Repeated lines performed by one singer are excluded, but the same line performed by different singers are counted as “different” under the assumption that each singer had to individually learn a line and recognize it to be metrical.

rather like we have seen in the Dan Maraya example in (5) and in Greenberg’s Meter 1 in (6).

In short, these examples from two Chadic languages spoken in Yobe State achieve the first goal mentioned at the beginning of this section, namely, to show that traditional songs in these languages conform to regular metrical structures that have a quantitative basis. Importantly, the remarkable metrical consistency in these songs has arisen through intuitive knowledge of the phonological properties of the languages, not from formal instruction of any kind.

5. Quantitative Metrics of Chadic Songs in Broader Perspective

We can now turn to the second goal stated at the beginning of the preceding section, namely, to use information from minority languages to develop a broad perspective on the nature of quantitative metrics. To do this it will be useful to work through the characteristics of Hausa verse that Greenberg cited in (4) as evidence of Arabic metrics being the source of quantitative metrics in Hausa.

5.1. “the quantitative nature of [Hausa] verse ... is unparalleled ... among African peoples not subject to intensive Islamic influence.” Writing in 1949, Greenberg simply did not have information from relevant African peoples! At that time, very little was known about the Chadic languages of northern Nigeria, and nothing at all about their native song traditions. The quantitative nature of prosody in Yobe State language songs is undisputable, but have the speakers of these languages been “subject to intensive Islamic influence”? I have already mentioned, at the end of §3, that Islamic practices reached a number of the ethnic groups in Yobe State only in the 20th century. The Boles have been Muslims throughout their known history, but Islamic influences have not extended to poetry and song. Bole has not been a written language aside from a few adult literacy pamphlets published in the 1950’s and more recent work in a research project in Yobe State from 2000-2009 (footnote 12). All Bole song is secular in content aside from a few songs performed during Islamic holiday seasons and these are certainly not Arabic influenced. In short, the quantitative nature of the metrics of songs in Yobe State languages has nothing to do with the influence of Islam.

5.2. “...the division of the line into hemistichs.” The term “hemistichs” (“half lines”) as used in studies of Arabic metrics is an artifact of the traditional way of writing poetry. Michael Cooperson (p.c.) has described the tradition this way: “... the classical meters ... require mono-end-rhymed lines of fixed length and a medial caesura. When printed, this is (jocularly) called ‘*amūdī* ‘columnar’, because it looks like two columns on the page.” In any other terminological tradition, Arabic “lines” would be called “couplets”, i.e. stanzas comprising two lines each (‘*yar tagwai* ‘twins’ in Hausa). The “medial caesura” is actually the line break, that is, the point at which the syllabic pattern that defines a meter ends, beginning anew with the next line (this break almost always also coincides with a significant syntactic juncture). The apparent reason for the Arabic written and terminological practice is to represent all consecutive “lines” as rhyming. When representing a poem as vertical couplets, as is always done in Hausa written poetry, one speaks of “external rhyme”, that is, the second lines of all couplets rhyme.

Setting aside the terminological irrelevancy, however, Greenberg’s observation calls attention to a significant feature of much folk poetry and song, namely the strong tendency for organization in terms of paired lines. Rhyming as in the Arabic tradition and in all Hausa written poetry builds such pairing into the form. However, line pairing is pervasive in folk poetry and song, even where rhyme is not used. In songs with a soloist and chorus, a typical form is to pair a line sung by a soloist with a line in the form of a refrain, sung by a chorus. This was illustrated in (7) and (9). Another typical form is for the soloist to sing a line with the chorus repeating the same line. There are also other, more subtle ways that lines of songs are grouped pairwise. In the Ngizim song in (10), the lines are paired in meaning, with the second line being some sort of comment on the first. The same is the case in the Bole song in (11).¹⁷ In some cases, one must hear the sung performance. In Schuh (2010:5) I cite the following lines from an Ngizim song: *Muuyaanaa yan, AWANDE↑ // Soo bee aci bau, AWANDE↓* ‘My friend come, *Awande* // Here’s what he got, *Awande*’.¹⁸ The first line ends on a higher sung pitch and the second line on a lower sung pitch (a “half-cadence” and an “authentic cadence” in musical terminology). Throughout the song, the lines are musically paired in this way.

It thus seems to be the case that there is something natural in the psychology of song creation to make groupings that emerge metrically as paired lines.¹⁹ Far from Hausa and other Chadic languages adopting this form from Arabic, it seems that Arabic poets took this natural tendency and formalized it in a particular way, that is, couplets with external rhyme of the second lines (or, in traditional Arabic terminology, lines comprising two hemistichs with end rhyme)!

5.3. “...Arabic verse avoids sequences of short syllables, a succession of three being rare and that of four almost unheard of.” One does encounter sequences of three, and even four light syllables in lines of songs in Yobe State languages, but they are rare. I have not made a count of such cases in songs that I have studied, but I doubt that they are more frequent than are found in the work of poets and singers working in the Hausa traditions. Even among Hausa poets working in the formal written tradition one occasionally finds lines like *Can kas suka gaane ma’adinammu* ‘There in the ground they recognized out minerals’ (Abubakar Ladan, “Wakar Had’a Kan Afirka”).

It is not really clear why this criterion should be viewed as special to Arabic. There are two reasons for apparent avoidance of long sequences of light syllables. One is that a language could have a lexical preponderance of heavy syllables. This is certainly the case for Hausa, given the fact that probably more than 90% of common nouns end in long vowels, and contextually I would guess that most verbs do as well.²⁰ It is thus somewhat surprising that sequences of three or more light syllables are not more common in song

¹⁷ In Schuh (2001:11) I give examples of a number of ways that lines are paired in sense, including question-answer, cause-effect, event-comment, and pairing of clauses with parallel syntactic structure.

¹⁸ *Awande*, perhaps a proper name, is sung by a chorus to fill out the end of each line.

¹⁹ Burling (1966) documented a widespread pattern in folk verse of 16-beat stanzas comprising four lines of four beats each. In English nursery rhymes these can almost always be viewed as comprising paired couplets. For example, *Peter, Peter pumpkin eater, // Had a wife and couldn’t keep her, // Put her in a pumpkin shell, // And there he kept her very well*. The lines fall into two couplets, where the lines of a couplet are thematically paired and rhyme.

²⁰ These estimates are impressionistic on my part but are roughly shared by Paul Newman (p.c.), at least for nouns. There is no question that heavy syllables predominate lexically in Hausa.

texts of Yobe State languages. In Bole and Ngizim, all vowel-final nouns of two or more syllables end in short vowels, and the morphology of verbs is such that most verb forms also end in short vowels.

A second reason that languages with quantitative metrics would avoid long sequences of light syllables relates directly to the rhythmic aspect of metrical language. Relatively stronger rhythmic positions attract heavy syllables. The rhythmic pulse would tend to get lost in a long string of light syllables. Traditional descriptions of Arabic metrics are usually stated as rules disallowing sequences of light syllables, but it seems likely that this stricture is really a by-product of the need for a meter to sustain a palpable rhythm. In Optimality Theoretical terms, the constraint would not be $* > 2$ CONSECUTIVE LIGHT SYLLABLES, but rather MARK RHYTHM.

5.4. “...the alternative use of a long syllable or two short syllables...”. The equivalence of $- = vv$ for metrical purposes pervades the meters of songs in Yobe State Languages. In (13) are four lines from the Bole song “Kona” discussed under (11). Focus is on the second half of each line; the first halves are parenthesized.

- (13) a. (Luula Diisa) juutuu ko bin. ‘(the cries of Disa) raised the hut roof’
 b. (Yaaya Gimba) wona laaduwo ‘(Yaaya Gimba) the dance is canceled’
 c. (Daada Juuma) ndag goma Ngara ‘(Dada Juma) went to Ngara market’
 d. (Ndi da wuya) zalii da wuya ‘(To go is difficult) to begin is difficult’

In (13a) the scansion is $--v-$, which is the most frequently occurring scansion in the available lines (see above for actual numbers). The scansion in (13b) is $vv-v-$, with vv rather than $-$ in the first position. The scansion in (13c) is $-vvv-$, with vv rather than $-$ for the second position.²¹ Line (13d) illustrates a different way in which $vv = -$. The scansion here is $\underline{v} - \underline{v} v -$. The underlined $v - v$ is moraically equivalent to $vv -$, involving an inversion of the second v and $-$. This moraically equivalent substitution has been noted with respect to (8).

5.5. “...reckoning of final syllables as long for metrical purposes”. In all the examples presented in this paper, I have represented, without comment, the line final syllables as being scanned “-”, that is, *heavy*, regardless of the lexical weights of those syllables. Syllable weight is actually neutralized in line-final syllables, that is, there are no meters of poetry/song in Hausa, Arabic, or any of the meters found in Yobe State languages where two meters could contrast, with one requiring line-final heavy syllables and another requiring line final light syllables. To my knowledge, however, all metrists interpret line-final syllables as being scanned as heavy regardless of lexical weight.

While I share this intuition, it turns out to be rather difficult to justify it without a certain amount of circular reasoning. For example, Akilu Aliyu’s poem “Sako a Hannun Mumini”²² is written in the meter *kaamil*, with two feet per line of the rather rigid

²¹ As noted above for this song meter, the second half of the line scans as $-v--$ for a substantial number of lines. An interpretation of (13c) could thus be that vv is used in place of $-$ for the penultimate $-$. I have chosen the interpretation in the text in order to associate the vv scansion with the word *goma* ‘market’. The alternative interpretation would join *-ma* of ‘market’ with the initial syllable of *Nga-* as the vv sequence.

²² The poem is published in Junaidu (1981).

scansion $\underline{v}v - v -$, yet we find lines like those in (14) where the first ends in a light syllable and the second line ends in a heavy.

- (14) Baa shii kadai ba, tsayaa ka ji, ‘It’s not only him, wait and listen,
Har yau da sauran maaganii. Even today there are other remedies.’

How do we justify scanning the final *ji* of the first line as heavy, even though it is lexically light? The argument would go as follows: “Feet in *kaamil* meter end in a heavy syllable, therefore *ji* must be scanned as heavy. What is the evidence that *ji* is scanned as heavy in (14)? Feet in *kaamil* must end in a heavy syllable.” We can, perhaps, partially escape from this circularity by appealing to consistency. I did not scan this entire poem line by line, but I believe that the first $\underline{v}v - v -$ foot in all 114 lines of this poem do end in lexically heavy syllables, as do most of the second feet. For the few lines that end in lexically light syllables, I do not think we want to say that Akilu altered the meter or made a metrical error.

We can apply the same reasoning to the indigenous song meters of Yobe State languages. Consider the Ngizim song in (10). I have represented all the lines in the example with the second half of each line as being scanned with three heavy syllables even though some of the lines end in lexically heavy syllables, some light. Our reasoning would go, “The second half of the line ends in three heavy syllables (= six moras). The syllable *-ja* ‘we, us, our’ in (10c) must therefore be scanned as heavy. What is the evidence for scanning *-ja* as heavy. The lines in this song end in three heavy syllables.” Our partial escape from this circularity will again be consistency. We know that the rhythm of this song is determined by concatenating four groupings of $-v$ determined by the rhythm of the grinding. This totals 12 moras. Do we want to say that in some cases the singer decides to alter the meter by using words that total just 11 moras?

In short, despite the somewhat circular arguments for scanning all line final syllables as heavy, the intuition of poets/singers and metrists that all line final syllable be scanned as heavy, regardless of lexical weight, seems justified. This intuition applies equally well to Arabic, Hausa in both the written and oral traditions, and songs of Chadic languages spoken in Yobe State.

6. Conclusion

Greenberg (1949) observed a number of apparently non-accidental similarities between quantitative systems of metrics shared by Arabic poets and Hausa poets and singers. Given the pervasive influence of Islam on Hausa culture and the fact that much Hausa poetry/song has Islamic themes and is composed in meters identifiable as being derived from Arabic, he concluded that the similarities should be attributed to Arabic influence. He reckoned that this influence extended to what he referred to as “popular poetry”, that is, poetry and song that is composed and performed in meters not directly related to meters known from the Arabic canon. He came to this conclusion about popular poetry because “the quantitative nature of this verse ... is unparalleled, as far as we know, among African peoples not subject to intensive Islamic influence.” The fundamental purpose of this paper has been to show that, in fact, all the features that he cited (4) are found in indigenous songs/poems of Chadic language speaking peoples of

Yobe State where there is no evidence of Arabic or Islamic influence, either in particular meters or in themes of the song texts.

Ironically, though Greenberg's hypothesis about the source of quantitative prosody in Hausa was wrong, his observations in support of that hypothesis serve as the basis for quite a different hypothesis:

- (15) THE HYPOTHESIS OF UNIVERSALS OF QUANTITATIVE METRICS: Prosodic systems of languages in which syllable quantity is phonologically salient will exhibit the properties in (4).

Arabic prosody has been studied and formally codified over many centuries. Classical Arabic poetry comprises one of the world's great compendia of literary art, and modern Arabic art poets continue to emulate it. The Arabic language has had massive influence on other languages, particularly through the spread of Islam. It is only natural to see Arabic as a driving force in literary composition in languages such as Hausa. The hypothesis in (15), however, puts the prosodic properties of Arabic art poetry on the same footing as those of the folksongs that Ngizim housewives sing as they grind! To be sure, poets composing in Arabic and Hausa have refined their forms and themes such that they can be called works of art, but the prosodic properties running through all the poems/songs mentioned in this paper are fundamentally the same.

Viewing the situation at a deeper historical level, we find that languages throughout the Afroasiatic phylum use quantitative prosodic systems with these properties. Other documented examples are found in Berber (Dell and Elmedlaoui 2008, Issouf 1982) and Cushitic (Johnson 1974). I suggest that the system of song prosody with the properties in (4) may well trace its origins to proto-Afroasiatic. Poets/singers working in languages like Arabic and Hausa have exploited this system in remarkable ways, but by looking at songs sung at the village level in minimally studied Chadic languages, we may well be studying the source of great art literatures!

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